Erik Erikson

Erik Homburger Erikson (born **Erik Salomonsen**; 15 June 1902 – 12 May 1994) was a German-American developmental psychologist and psychoanalyst known for his theory on psychological development of human beings. He may be most famous for coining the phrase *identity crisis*. His son, Kai T. Erikson, is a noted American sociologist.

Despite lacking a bachelor's degree, Erikson served as a professor at prominent institutions, including Harvard, University of California, Berkeley,[8] and Yale. A *Review of General Psychology* survey, published in 2002, ranked Erikson as the 12th most cited psychologist of the 20th century.[9]

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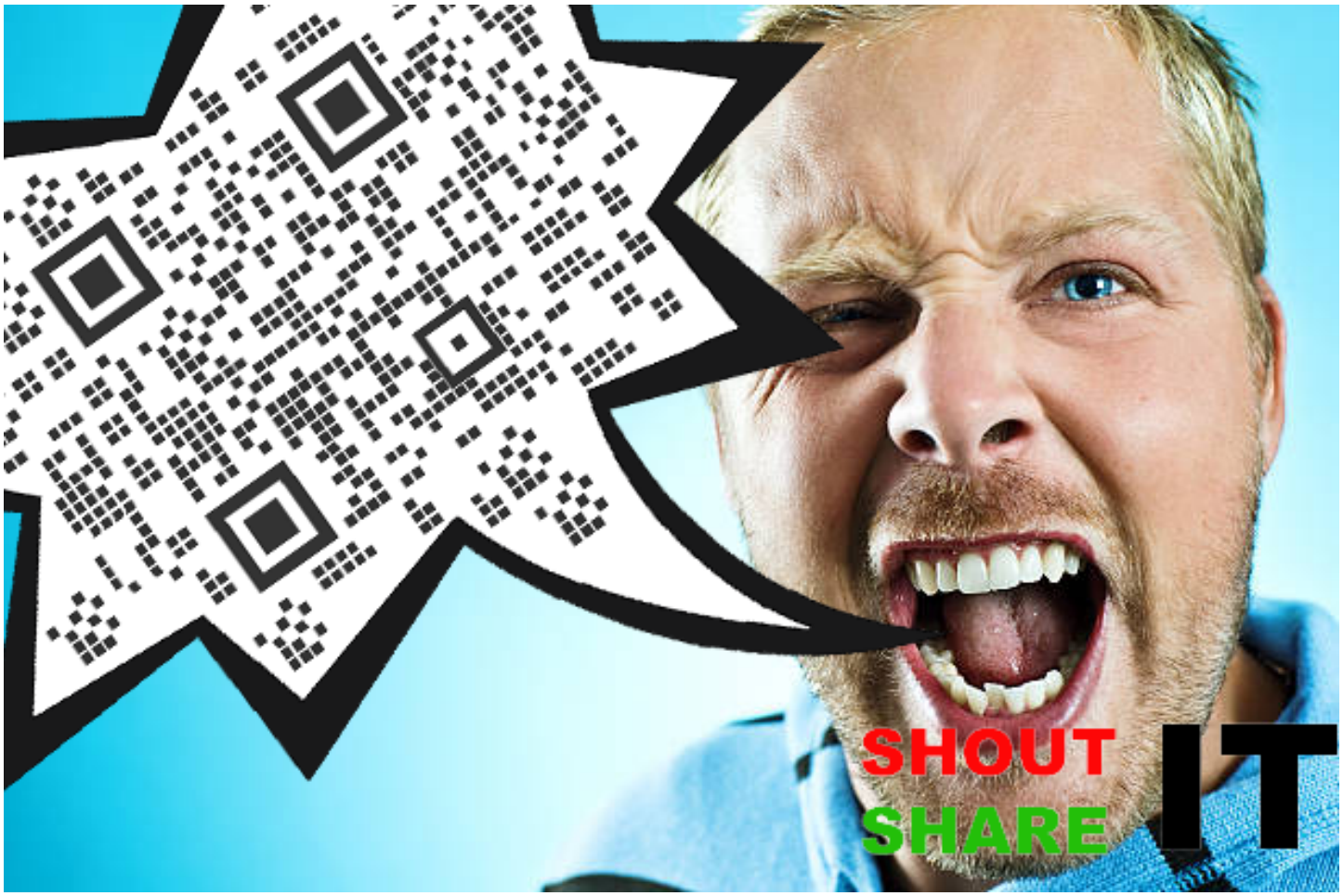
Early life

Erikson's mother, Karla Abrahamsen, came from a prominent Jewish family in Copenhagen, Denmark. She was married to Jewish stockbroker Valdemar Isidor Salomonsen, but had been estranged from him for several months at the time Erik was conceived. Little is known about Erik's biological father except that he was a non-Jewish Dane. On discovering her pregnancy, Karla fled to Frankfurt am Main in Germany where Erik was

Erik Erikson

Born	Erik Salomonsen 15 June 1902 Frankfurt, Hesse, Germany[1]
Died	12 May 1994 (aged 91) Harwich, Massachusetts, U.S.[1]
Citizenship	American · German
Spouse(s)	Joan Serson Erikson (m. 1930)
Children	Kai T. Erikson · Jon Erikson · Sue Erikson Bloland · Neil
Awards	Pulitzer Prize (1970) National Book Award (1970)
Academic background	
Influences	Ruth Benedict[2] · Anna Freud[3] · Sigmund Freud[4] · Margaret Mead[2]
Academic work	
Discipline	Psychology
Sub-discipline	Developmental psychology ·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born on 15 June 1902 and was given the surname Salomonsen.[10] She fled due to conceiving Erik out of wedlock, and the identity of Erik's birth father was never made clear.[8]

Following Erik's birth, Karla trained to be a nurse and moved to Karlsruhe. In 1905 she married Erik's Jewish pediatrician, Theodor Homburger. In 1908, Erik Salomonsen's name was changed to Erik Homburger, and in 1911 he was officially adopted by his stepfather.[11] Karla and Theodor told Erik that Theodor was his real father, only revealing the truth to him in late childhood; he remained bitter about the deception all his life.[8]

The development of identity seems to have been one of Erikson's greatest concerns in his own life as well as being central to his theoretical work. As an older adult, he wrote about his adolescent "identity confusion" in his European days. "My identity confusion", he wrote "[was at times on] the borderline between neurosis and adolescent psychosis." Erikson's daughter writes that her father's "real psychoanalytic identity" was not established until he "replaced his stepfather's surname [Homburger] with a name of his own invention [Erikson]."[12] The change in last name occurred as he started his job at Yale, and the "Erikson" name was accepted by Erik's family when they became American citizens.[8] It is said his children enjoyed the fact they would not be called "Hamburger" any longer.[8]

	psychoanalysis
Institutions	Yale University University of California, Berkeley University of Pittsburgh Harvard University
Notable students	Richard Sennett
Notable works	*Childhood and Society* (1950) *Young Man Luther* (1958) *Gandhi's Truth* (1969) *The Life Cycle Completed* (1987)
Notable ideas	Theory on psychological development
Influenced	Eric Berne[5] · Robert Coles[6] · Howard Gardner[7] · James Marcia

Erik was a tall, blond, blue-eyed boy who was raised in the Jewish religion. Due to these mixed identities, he was a target of bigotry by both Jewish and gentile children. At temple school, his peers teased him for being Nordic; while at grammar school, he was teased for being Jewish.[13] At Das Humanistische Gymnasium his main interests were art, history and languages, but he lacked a general interest in school and graduated without academic distinction.[14] After graduation, instead of attending medical school as his stepfather had desired, he attended art school in Munich, much to the likes of his mother and her friends.

Uncertain about his vocation and his fit in society, Erik dropped out of school and began a lengthy period of roaming about Germany and Italy as a wandering artist with his childhood friend Peter Blos and others. For children from prominent German families taking a "wandering year" was not uncommon. During his travels he often sold or traded his sketches to people he met. Eventually, Erik realized he would never become a full-time artist and returned to Karlsruhe and became an art teacher. During the time he worked at his teaching job Erik was hired by an heiress to sketch and eventually tutor her children. Erik worked very well with these children and was eventually hired by many other families that were close to Anna and Sigmund Freud.[8] During this period, which lasted until he was 25 years old, he continued to contend with questions about his father and competing ideas of ethnic, religious, and national identity.[15]

Psychoanalytic experience and training

When Erikson was twenty-five, his friend Peter Blos invited him to Vienna to tutor art [8] at the small Burlingham-Rosenfeld School for children whose affluent parents were undergoing psychoanalysis by Sigmund Freud's daughter, Anna Freud.[16] Anna noticed Erikson's sensitivity to children at the school and encouraged him to study psychoanalysis at the Vienna Psychoanalytic Institute, where prominent analysts August Aichhorn, Heinz Hartmann, and Paul Federn were among those who supervised his theoretical studies. He specialized in child analysis and underwent a training analysis with Anna Freud. Helene Deutsch and Edward Bibring supervised his initial treatment of an adult.[16] Simultaneously he studied the Montessori method of education, which focused on child development and sexual stages.[17] In 1933 he received his diploma from the Vienna Psychoanalytic Institute. This and his Montessori diploma were to be Erikson's only earned academic credentials for his life's work.

United States

In 1930 Erikson married Joan Mowat Serson, a Canadian dancer and artist whom Erikson had met at a dress ball.[1][18][19] During their marriage Erikson converted to Christianity.[20][21] In 1933, with Adolf Hitler's rise to power in Germany, the burning of Freud's books in Berlin and the potential Nazi threat to Austria, the family left an impoverished Vienna with their two young sons and emigrated to Copenhagen. Unable to regain Danish citizenship because of residence requirements, the family left for the United States, where citizenship would not be an issue.[22]

In the United States, Erikson became the first child psychoanalyst in Boston and held positions at Massachusetts General Hospital, the Judge Baker Guidance Center, and at Harvard Medical School and Psychological Clinic, establishing a singular reputation as a clinician. In 1936, Erikson left Harvard and joined the staff at Yale University, where he worked at the Institute of Social Relations and taught at the medical school.

Erikson continued to deepen his interest in areas beyond psychoanalysis and to explore connections between psychology and anthropology. He made important contacts with anthropologists such as Margaret Mead, Gregory Bateson, and Ruth Benedict.[23] Erikson said his theory of the development of thought derived from his social and cultural studies. In 1938, he left Yale to study the Sioux tribe in South Dakota on their reservation. After his studies in South Dakota he traveled to California to study the Yurok tribe. Erikson discovered differences between the children of the Sioux and Yurok tribe. This also marked the beginning of Erikson's life passion of showing the importance of events in childhood and how society affects them.[24]

In 1939 he left Yale, and the Eriksons moved to California, where Erik had been invited to join a team engaged in a longitudinal study of child development for the University of California at Berkeley's Institute of Child Welfare. In addition, in San Francisco he opened a private practice in child psychoanalysis.

While in California he was able to make his second study of American Indian children when he joined anthropologist Alfred Kroeber on a field trip to Northern California to study the Yurok.[14]

In 1950, after publishing the book, *Childhood and Society*, for which he is best known, Erikson left the University of California when California's Levering Act required professors there to sign loyalty oaths.[25] From 1951 to 1960 he worked and taught at the Austen Riggs Center, a prominent psychiatric treatment facility in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, where he worked with emotionally troubled young

people. During this time he also served as a visiting professor at the University of Pittsburgh where he worked with Benjamin Spock and Fred Rogers at Arsenal Nursery School of the Western Psychiatric Institute.[26]

He returned to Harvard in the 1960s as a professor of human development and remained there until his retirement in 1970. In 1973 the National Endowment for the Humanities selected Erikson for the Jefferson Lecture, the United States' highest honor for achievement in the humanities. Erikson's lecture was titled *Dimensions of a New Identity*.[27][28]

Theories of development and the ego

Erikson is also credited with being one of the originators of ego psychology, which stressed the role of the ego as being more than a servant of the id. Although Erikson accepted Freud's theory, he did not focus on the parent-child relationship and gave more importance to the role of the ego, particularly the person's progression as self.[29] According to Erikson, the environment in which a child lived was crucial to providing growth, adjustment, a source of self-awareness and identity. Erikson won a Pulitzer Prize[30] and a US National Book Award in category Philosophy and Religion[31] for *Gandhi's Truth* (1969), which focused more on his theory as applied to later phases in the life cycle.

In Erikson's discussion of development, rarely did he mention a stage of development by age but in fact did refer to a *prolonged adolescence* which has led to further investigation into a period of development between adolescence and young adulthood called *emerging adulthood*.[32] On ego identity versus role confusion: ego identity enables each person to have a sense of individuality, or as Erikson would say, "Ego identity, then, in its subjective aspect, is the awareness of the fact that there is a self-sameness and continuity to the ego's synthesizing methods and a continuity of one's meaning for others".[33] Role confusion, however, is, according to Barbara Engler, "the inability to conceive of oneself as a productive member of one's own society."[34] This inability to conceive of oneself as a productive member is a great danger; it can occur during adolescence, when looking for an occupation.

Erikson's theory of personality

The Erikson life-stage virtues, in order of the eight stages in which they may be acquired, are:

1. **Hope, Basic trust vs. basic mistrust**—This stage covers the period of infancy, 0–18 months, which is the most fundamental stage of life. Whether the baby develops basic trust or basic mistrust is not merely a matter of nurture. It is multi-faceted and has strong social components. It depends on the quality of the maternal relationship. The mother carries out and reflects her inner perceptions of trustworthiness, a sense of personal meaning, etc. on the child. An important part of this stage is providing stable and constant care of the infant. This helps the child develop trust that can transition into relationships other than parental. Additionally, children develop trust in others to support them.[35] If successful in this, the baby develops a sense of trust, which "forms the basis in the child for a sense of identity." Failure to develop this trust will result in a feeling of fear and a sense that the world is inconsistent and unpredictable.
2. **Will, Autonomy vs. shame**—Covers early childhood around 1–3 years old. Introduces the concept of autonomy vs. shame and doubt. The child begins to discover the beginnings of his or her independence, and parents must facilitate the child's sense of doing basic tasks "all by himself/herself." Discouragement can lead to the child doubting his or her efficacy. During this stage the child is usually trying to master toilet training. Additionally, the child discovers his talents or abilities, and it is important to ensure the child is able to explore

those activities. Erikson states it is essential to allow the children freedom in exploration but also create an environment welcoming of failures. Therefore, the parent should not punish or reprimand the child for failing at the task. Shame and doubt occurs when the child feels incompetent in ability to complete task and survive. Will is achieved with success of the stage. Children successful in this stage will have "self-control without a loss of self-esteem."[35]

3. **Purpose, Initiative vs. guilt**—Preschool / 3–5 years. Does the child have the ability to do things on her own, such as dress herself? Children in this stage are interacting with peers, and creating their own games and activities. If allowed to make these decisions, the child will develop confidence in her ability to lead others. If the child is not allowed to make certain decisions the sense of guilt develops. Guilt in this stage is characterized by a sense of being a burden to others, and the child will therefore usually present herself as a follower. Additionally, the child is asking many questions to build knowledge of the world. If the questions earn responses that are critical and condescending, the child will also develop feelings of guilt. Success in this stage leads to the virtue of purpose, which is the normal balance between the two extremes.[35]
4. **Competence, Industry vs. inferiority**—School-age / 6–11 years. Child comparing self-worth to others (such as in a classroom environment). Child can recognize major disparities in personal abilities relative to other children. Erikson places some emphasis on the teacher, who should ensure that children do not feel inferior. During this stage the child's friend group increases in importance in his life. Often during this stage the child will try to prove competency with things rewarded in society, and also develop satisfaction with his abilities. Encouraging the child increases feelings of adequacy and competency in ability to reach goals. Restriction from teachers or parents leads to doubt, questioning, and reluctance in abilities and therefore may not reach full capabilities. Competence, the virtue of this stage, is developed when a healthy balance between the two extremes is reached.[35]
5. **Fidelity, Identity vs. role confusion**—Adolescent / 12–18 years. Questioning of self. Who am I, how do I fit in? Where am I going in life? The adolescent is exploring and seeking for her own unique identity. This is done by looking at personal beliefs, goals, and values. The morality of the individual is also explored and developed.[35] Erikson believes that if the parents allow the child to explore, she will determine her own identity. If, however, the parents continually push her to conform to their views, the teen will face identity confusion. The teen is also looking towards the future in terms of employment, relationships, and families. Learning the roles she provides in society is essential since the teen begins to develop the desire to fit in to society. Fidelity is characterized by the ability to commit to others and acceptance of others even with differences. Identity crisis is the result of role confusion and can cause the adolescent to try out different lifestyles.[35]
6. **Love, Intimacy vs. isolation**—This is the first stage of adult development. This development usually happens during young adulthood, which is between the ages of 18 to 40. Dating, marriage, family and friendships are important during the stage in their life. This is due to the increase in the growth of intimate relationships with others.[35] By successfully forming loving relationships with other people, individuals are able to experience love and intimacy.They also feel safety, care, and commitment in these relationships.[35] Furthermore, if individuals are able to successfully resolve the crisis of intimacy versus isolation, they are able to achieve the virtue of love.[36] Those who fail to form lasting relationships may feel isolated and alone.
7. **Care, Generativity vs. stagnation**—The second stage of adulthood happens between the ages of 40-65. During this time people are normally settled in their lives and know what is important to them. A person is either making progress in his career or treading lightly in his career and unsure if this is what he wants to do for the rest of his working life. Also during this time, if a person is enjoying raising his children and participating in activities, that gives him a sense of purpose. This is one way of contributing to society along with productivity at work and involvement in community activities and organizations.[35] If a person is not

comfortable with the way his life is progressing, he's usually regretful about the decisions that he has made in the past and feels a sense of uselessness.

8. **Wisdom, Ego integrity vs. despair**—This stage affects the age group of 65 and on. During this time an individual has reached the last chapter in her life and retirement is approaching or has already taken place. Ego-integrity means the acceptance of life in its fullness: the victories and the defeats, what was accomplished and what was not accomplished. Wisdom is the result of successfully accomplishing this final developmental task. Wisdom is defined as "informed and detached concern for life itself in the face of death itself."[37] Having a guilty conscience about the past or failing to accomplish important goals will eventually lead to depression and hopelessness. Achieving the virtue of the stage involves the feeling of living a successful life.[35]
9. For the **Ninth Stage** see Erikson's stages of psychosocial development § Ninth Stage.

Favorable outcomes of each stage are sometimes known as *virtues*, a term used in the context of Erikson's work as it is applied to medicine, meaning "potencies". These virtues are also interpreted to be the same as "strengths", which are considered inherent in the individual life cycle and in the sequence of generations.[38] Erikson's research suggests that each individual must learn how to hold both extremes of each specific life-stage challenge in tension with one another, not rejecting one end of the tension or the other. Only when both extremes in a life-stage challenge are understood and accepted as both required and useful, can the optimal virtue for that stage surface. Thus, 'trust' and 'mis-trust' must both be understood and accepted, in order for realistic 'hope' to emerge as a viable solution at the first stage. Similarly, 'integrity' and 'despair' must both be understood and embraced, in order for actionable 'wisdom' to emerge as a viable solution at the last stage.

Personal life

Erikson married Canadian-born American psychologist Joan Erikson (née Sarah Lucretia Serson) in 1930 and they remained together until his death.[20]

The Eriksons had four children, the eldest of whom is the sociologist Kai T. Erikson. Jon Erikson. Their daughter, Sue Erikson Bloland, "an integrative psychotherapist and psychoanalyst",[39] described her father as plagued by "lifelong feelings of personal inadequacy".[40] He thought that by combining resources with his wife, he could "achieve the recognition" that might produce a feeling of adequacy.[41] Their youngest son is Neil Erikson.

Erikson died on 12 May 1994 in Harwich, Massachusetts. He is buried in the First Congregational Church Cemetery in Harwich.[42]

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See also

- Erikson Institute

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External links

- Works by or about Erik Erikson (https://archive.org/search.php?query=%28%28subject%3A%22Erikson%2C%20Erik%20Hamburger%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22Erikson%2C%20Erik%20H%2E%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22Erikson%2C%20E%2E%20H%2E%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22Erik%20Hamburger%20Erikson%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22Erik%20H%2E%20Erikson%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22E%2E%20H%2E%20Erikson%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22Erikson%2C%20Erik%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22Erik%20Erikson%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Erik%20Hamburger%20Erikson%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Erik%20H%2E%20Erikson%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22E%2E%20H%2E%20Erikson%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22E%2E%20Hamburger%20Erikson%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Erikson%2C%20Erik%20Hamburger%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Erikson%2C%20Erik%20H%2E%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Erikson%2C%20E%2E%20H%2E%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Erikson%2C%20E%2E%20Hamburger%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Erik%20Erikson%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Erikson%2C%20Erik%22%20OR%20title%3A%22Erik%20Hamburger%20Erikson%22%20OR%20title%3A%22Erik%20H%2E%20Erikson%22%20OR%20title%3A%22E%2E%20H%2E%20Erikson%22%20OR%20title%3A%22Erik%20Erikson%22%20OR%20description%3A%22Erik%20Hamburger%20Erikson%22%20OR%20description%3A%22Erik%20H%2E%20Erikson%22%20OR%20description%3A%22E%2E%20H%2E%20Erikson%22%20OR%20description%3A%22Erikson%2C%20Erik%20Hamburger%22%20OR%20description%3A%22Erikson%2C%20Erik%20H%2E%22%20OR%20description%3A%22Erik%20Erikson%22%20OR%20description%3A%22Erikson%2C%20Erik%22%29%20OR%20%28%221902-1994%22%20AND%20Erikson%29%29%20AND%20%28-mediatype:software%29) at Internet Archive

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